

# The Gospel According to Luke

## **“Cross Walk”**

Chapter 9:18-27

### Introduction

I did a search on [eBay](#), looking for an electric chair – the kind used in prisons for executions. To my surprise, I found one – although it was a replica and not in working condition. I thought we’d put it in the Entry this morning, as a visual aid to the message.

Before you think I’m crazy, consider the shock-value (no pun intended!) of what Jesus said to His disciples. To describe the extent of the total commitment He expected of His followers, Jesus used an image the disciples were familiar with, but definitely not ready for. He used the Cross. The Cross was the Roman means of execution. If you want to know what discipleship is like, look at a man carrying his Cross to the place of his execution.

Stunned is the only word I can think of to describe the response to this revelation. Who would want to live like that – with every day being a cross-walk to your execution?

Well, for starters, *Jesus lived like that!* All those who own Him as Lord will live like that! We’d better take a look at what it means for us; because we, too, own Him as Lord.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Took Up His Cross Before He Came, and #2 Take Up Your Cross Until Jesus Comes.

### #1 Jesus Took Up His Cross Before He Came (v18-22)

There is something I want you to bear in mind as we get into these first few verses. Jesus knew ahead of time that He would be crucified on the Cross at Calvary. He knew ahead of time, and said that He

would suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

When I say He knew “ahead of time,” I mean *ahead of time!* Before the universe was spoken into existence; before the earth was formed; before God created man, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden; the Son of God knew He would go to the Cross.

In that very real sense, Jesus took up His Cross even before He came. In eternity past, in the counsels of the Trinity, the plan of saving a sinful race was determined. Before the foundations of the earth, Jesus took up His Cross. Thus, when Jesus told His disciples, and when He tells you as His disciple, to take up [your] cross daily, He’s describing something He had done for ages before He came, and that He was exempling on earth in His coming.

Jesus used the phrase, take up your Cross. When you were condemned to death by crucifixion, you literally took up your Cross. You carried the cross-member upon your shoulders, and you walked through town to the place of your execution. Taking up your Cross is *not* about dying on the Cross; it’s about living under the Cross – about living each day submitted to the understanding that your life has been forfeited to a higher authority.

Luke 9:18 And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”

Let’s highlight prayer for just a moment. One of the Deacons recently sent me this quote:

Prayer is both the *thermometer* and the *thermostat* of the local church; for the *spiritual temperature* either goes up or down, depending on how God’s people pray.

Are we cold? Are we hot? Let me encourage you to join the e-mail Prayer Force; to come a few minutes early, before either Sunday morning service, and pray; to come the first Sunday evening of the month to pray.

I like the words, [His disciples joined Him](#). The Bible tells us that, after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven and is constantly praying for us. So, in a very real way, whenever you pray, *you are joining Jesus!*

As they prayed, Jesus [asked them, saying](#), “[Who do the crowds say that I am?](#)”

[Luke 9:19](#) so they answered and said, “[John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.](#)”

We could speculate as to the reasons why these particular three answers were being given. More to the point, the people saw Jesus as a mere man, like [John](#) or [Elijah](#) or one of the [prophets](#); and they speculated how a mere man might be able to do and say such things.

What mere man ever claimed to live a completely sinless life?<sup>1</sup> What mere man ever claimed to be the only and exclusive way to God?<sup>2</sup> What mere man ever claimed to be able to forgive sins?<sup>3</sup> What mere man ever claimed to be able to give you eternal life?<sup>4</sup> What mere man ever claimed he would return to earth to judge the world?<sup>5</sup>

In his famous book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis makes this statement,

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."

Unbelievers do the same thing in every era. We might not think of Jesus as [John](#) or [Elijah](#); but plenty of people are willing to say He was a [prophet](#). For the most part, historians and humanists say Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> John 8:28-29

<sup>2</sup> John 14:6

<sup>3</sup> Luke 5:20-21

<sup>4</sup> John 6:40 & 47

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 24:27-30 & 25:31-32

was a great teacher, or a sound moralist willing to die for his convictions - but still just a mere man. At least be honest. If you don't believe that Jesus was Lord, call Him a **lunatic**; or a **liar**.

Luke 9:20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

We go through life trusting others to watch out for us. We have agencies that oversee and approve our foods; our medications; that sort of thing. To a certain extent, it's necessary. But when it comes to eternal life, to matters of the eternal, invaluable soul, you really need to look into it yourself. It must be a personal, individual decision.

When Jesus asked His disciples, **Who do you say that I am?**, He was asking everyone, throughout all of human history, to give their answer. He was asking you. Jesus was, and is, either Lord - or He is not.

Luke 9:20 ...Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

**Christ** is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for Messiah, and it means *anointed one*. Peter **answered** that Jesus was the Messiah, the anointed servant of God, the One Whose coming was promised in the Old Testament.

OK; break out the crowns! The Messiah was going to establish God's kingdom on earth; they had been preaching the kingdom; here was the King.

The crowns would have to wait:

Luke 9:21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one,  
Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

Why **tell... no one**? The Jews were expecting a conquering King to come and free them from Rome. They were not expecting a crucified King to free them from sin. The message would make no sense to the disciples until after Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus spoke plainly about His mission. He would **suffer many things**. Then He would be officially rejected by the Jewish leaders. Then He would be **killed**. But three days later He would be resurrected and live forevermore.

The Messiah is first referred to as **the Son of Man** by the prophet Daniel. Jesus is called by that title over eighty times in the gospels and it was the most common name that He used for Himself. It was a term of His humiliation – of God taking on human flesh.

Jesus literally took up His Cross and walked to His crucifixion. But long ages before He carried His Cross to Calvary, He had already taken up His Cross. In humble submission, the Second Person of the Godhead determined to take upon Himself a body of flesh; to come and walk among His creatures; to die in their place, that they might have eternal life. From some moment in eternity past, until His death on the Cross, Jesus was on a Cross-walk.

It's your example. Jesus is not asking you to do anything that He has not already done, and to a much greater extent.

## #2 Take Up Your Cross Until Jesus Comes (v23-27)

While the disciples were still stunned, Jesus told them something even more startling.

**Luke 9:23 Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**

Before we break this down into its parts, let the whole statement sink in. Following Jesus was like watching a man carrying his Cross to the place of execution. The most basic understanding of that image is this: A man carrying his Cross was submitted to the complete authority of Rome. Just so, a disciple is to be submitted to the complete authority of the Lord.

Let me interject two thoughts before we continue:

1. Remember that Jesus voluntarily took up His Cross. He submitted Himself to it in eternity past.
2. In describing Jesus' voluntary submission to His Cross, the Bible says He did it for the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). Part of that joy was to make eternal life available to you.

Taking up your Cross may sound awful; but the Bible describes Jesus doing it *voluntarily* and for *joy*.

Now we can look at its parts:

1. **If anyone desires to come after Me.** Jesus spoke of desire. It's a word that implies a personal decision.
2. **Let him deny himself.** Jesus used the word deny. We talk about denying ourselves certain things, as an act of our will. That's the idea, except that here you are not just denying some habit, but you are denying your indwelling selfishness. You are admitting you are selfish at your very core.
3. **Let him take up his cross daily.** This must occur daily. It is not a once in a lifetime decision. It is a moment-by-moment determination to follow God and not your self.

Do you **desire** to follow Jesus? Then you will **daily deny** your own dreams and desires and drives. Instead, you will seek the Lord for His will.

When you saw a man carrying his Cross, you immediately understood he was walking a path set for him by Rome. In a similar way, when you see a Christian, you should immediately see a person who is walking a path set for them by Jesus.

Why would you ever want to be on this Cross-walk? Jesus tells you:

**Luke 9:24** For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Behind this principle is an idea we don't always buy into. Your life is never really your own, to live as you please. You were born a sinner. You possessed a sin nature, and you committed actual sins. Though you may not have been as bad as the next person, you were, in a

very real way, a slave to your sin. You didn't know it, but you were a citizen in the kingdom of darkness, ruled by the devil.

If you try to **save** your **life**, apart from faith in Jesus, you can only become more lost. If you will **lose** your life by submitting to Jesus, you will be set free from sin and death. Not free to do whatever you please; but free to follow the Lord and do what pleases Him.

Jesus then made two practical applications of this principle – A *personal* application, and a *prophetic* application.

He applied it to you personally in verse twenty-five:

**Luke 9:25** For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?

I've always thought of this as an exaggeration, for the sake of illustration. We speak of folks who 'have it all,' but no one ever really does. Then I remembered something: Earlier, right after Jesus' baptism, He was driven out into the wilderness, and Satan offered to literally give Him **the whole world**. All the kingdoms of the world **would** be His if the Lord would simply worship the devil.

People who are selfishly pursuing this world and its possessions, power, and pleasures, can never really gain **the whole world**. But you shouldn't even want any part of it, because it belongs to the devil, and you end up serving him and are eventually **destroyed** on earth and **lost** for eternity.

Jesus then applied the principle of verse twenty-four prophetically:

**Luke 9:26** For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

You should not think of life on earth apart from looking forward to Jesus' Second Coming. Nothing is more certain than the physical, bodily return of Jesus to earth. He will come, as the lightning flashes from the east to the west; and when He comes, He's coming in power

and **glory**, with His **holy angels**. He will sit in judgment over the nations and their citizens, and determine their eternal destinies.

Your Cross-walk is made much lighter when you're looking up for the return of the Lord. In our case, we won't be around for the Second Coming; **we will be coming back with the Lord!** The Church is promised a Rapture.

In light of His sure return, Jesus ended this talk by saying,

**Luke 9:27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."**

In the very next verses, this is fulfilled when Peter, John, and James are with Jesus, and He is transfigured so that they see Him in His **glory**, as He will appear in His Second Coming.

**This promise will also be fulfilled at the Rapture!** Some believers **shall not taste death**, but will be caught-up alive into heaven.

There something else I should talk about. We sometimes use the expression, "it's your Cross to bear." Typically, we think of a particular affliction, or adversity, or anguish, and say, "it's your Cross to bear." I've even heard people describe their spouse as their Cross!

It's not a good idea to think on such small terms. If, let's say, an illness is seen as your Cross, then if you get cured or healed, you think you're free from your Cross. You might then think you can go for days, or weeks, or months, or longer, without any 'Crosses' to bear.

*That's not true!* You daily decide to take up your Cross. Your Cross is to deny your own dreams and desires and drives, and instead obey God's enabling Word. Affliction, adversity, anguish, and the like, might be a part of your life. But they are *not* your Cross.



## Conclusion

One more thought. I said earlier that Jesus volunteered to take up His Cross; and that He did so for the **joy** that was set before Him. **He knew that there was a particular Cross-walk that He would take, at the end of which was glory.**

Why should you volunteer to take up your Cross? **Because it is yours.** Jesus said **If anyone desires to come after Me, let him... take up his Cross...**

You don't know all the steps, but Jesus has a uniquely prepared Cross-walk for you. He will lead you into, and through, all the things that will bring you, in the end, to be conformed into His image. He will complete the good work He has begun in you.

If you keep that in mind, you will voluntarily take up your custom Cross for the joy that Jesus has set before you.